



**RABBI JUDAH**

**MISCHEL**

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# Holy Shlepping

The holy Rav Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld, zt'l, was one of the great tzadikim of Yerushalayim in the early part of the Twentieth Century. A talmid of the Ksav Sofer and one of the founders of the Eida Chareidis, he was respected as a scholar and *poseik*, as well as for his unwavering commitment to tradition during a turbulent time. An account of his life is told in the multi-volume sefer, *HaIsh al haChomah*. Rav Zonnenfeld's daughter, Rebbetzin Rochel Breindel Friedman, shared the following memory of her great father:

Once when she was a young girl, her father was particularly late in returning from the Beis Medrash. Concerned about his whereabouts, Rochel Breindel's mother sent

her to go and see if anything was wrong. On the way, she found her father filling up pails of water for two little children. "Tatty, what's going on? Are you the new *vasertreiger*, the new water-schlepper in town?"

"My dear," he replied, "as I was coming home I saw these two children standing dangerously close to the edge of the well trying to draw water; I admonished them to move away, that it was unsafe, and 'Let the water-boy bring it to your house!' The older of the children replied that they couldn't afford to have water delivered. I asked where their parents were. Their mother recently gave birth and their father is sick in bed with a fever and unable to leave the house. I've been drawing pails for them to bring home to fill the water tank...."

"But *Tatteh*, you're wearing a *kaftan* and are the Rav of the neighborhood, what will people say?" She asked her father. "It's not *kvodik*, it is below your dignity."

"What will *people* say? What would the *Ribbono Shel Olam* say if I didn't help these children? Could I go home and calmly eat my breakfast while these poor young children are endangering their lives in order to bring water for their incapacitated parents?"

Rav Zonnenfeld straightened up and looked his daughter lovingly in the eye. "Please remember, my child, there is nothing more *mechubad*, nothing more honorable, than helping other Yidden."

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Our sedra recounts Eliezer's mission to Aram Naharayim to find a wife suitable for Yitzchak Avinu. Eliezer davens that Hashem will perform a *chesed* for his master Avraham, namely a clear indicator that he has found the right match: a young woman among the maidens at the city's well, a central meeting spot, who would be forthcoming and gracious in offering water for him and his camels. Before even finishing his *tefillah*, Eliezer spots Rivka:

והינה רבקה יצאת... וכבדה על־שכמה... ותָרַד הָעֵינָה ונתמלא כדה ותעל:

...And behold, Rivka came out... and her pitcher was on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and she filled her pitcher and ascended.

וירץ העבד לקראתה ויאמר הגמלאיני נא מעט־מים מבכר:

The servant ran toward her and said, "Please, let me sip a little water from your pitcher."

ותאמר שותה אדני ותמהר ותָרַד כדה על־יָדָה ותשקהו:

"Drink, my lord," she said, and she quickly lowered her pitcher upon her hand and let him drink. (24:15-18)

Rashi explains why Eliezer was excited and ran toward Rivka: לפי שראה שעלו המים לקראתה, seeing that the water rose up from within the spring to greet her, he understood that she was a *tzadikes*, a righteous woman who merited a miraculous event. Witnessing this, Eliezer sensed it might be the answer to his prayer, and this was confirmed as Rivka generously offered him a drink and to fetch more water for his camels and entourage. This time however, there was something different as Rivka approached the spring:

ותָרַץ עוד אֶל־הַבְּאֵר לְשֵׂאב וּתְשִׂיב לְכָל־גְּמָלוֹ



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...And she ran again to the well to draw water, and she drew for all his camels. (24:20)

Unlike the first time Rivka approached the wellspring and the water rose up to greet her, this time there was no supernatural event. In fact, she had to expend considerable effort, lowering the jug, filling it and then lifting the heavy vessel onto her shoulder.

The Kedushas Levi, Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, zy'a, shares an important insight, suggesting why this is so:

בפעם ראשונה דבדעתה היה לשאוב המים לצורכה  
גלל כן עלו המים לקראתה שלא תטריח עצמה, כיון  
שכוונתה היה לשאוב לצרכה,

When Eliezer saw Rivka for the first time, she was simply getting herself a drink to quench her thirst. In order to honor the needs of the *tzadekes*, the Ribbono Shel Olam performed a miracle, and the water rose to greet her. The world is in service of the righteous....

מה שאין כן בפעם שניה, שכוונתה היה לגמול חסד  
להשקות הגמלים של אליעזר עבד אברהם לא עלו המים  
לקראתה,

However in her second trip to the spring, when Rivka's intention was to serve Eliezer, to draw water not for her own needs, but for him and the camels, no miracle was forthcoming and the water did not rise to greet her.

שכשאדם עושה מצוה יותר נחשב לעשות פעולה  
שבבעשותו פעולה לשם מצוה נחשב לו יותר למצוה...

For what is most essential in a mitzvah — and in performing an act of *chesed* in particular — is the hard work, investment and effort we expend. There are no shortcuts in giving to others, because a shortcut might diminish the reward, as expressed

in the piyut *Yigdal*, recited in our daily prayers:

גומל לְאִישׁ חֶסֶד בְּמַפְעָלוֹ, נוֹתֵן לְרָשָׁע רָע בְּרָשָׁעוֹתָו:

“Hashem repays the righteous **for his actions**,

and punishes the wicked in proportion to their wickedness.”

While we are held accountable for the wrongdoings that we commit *k'rishaso*, “according to their negativity”, the acts of *chesed* and goodness that we have done are rewarded *k'mifalo*, “according to our action”. And the reward for this is generous, as it takes into account all of our intention, investment and effort.

.....

ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה לפנות ערב וישא עיניו וירא

והנה גמלים באים

“Yitzhak went out to converse with God in the field at dusk, and he raised his eyes and saw, behold, camels were arriving...” (24:63)

The Torah's choice of language, that Yitzchak lifted up his eyes and saw גמלים, “camels”, is puzzling. One would expect more of an ‘uplifting vision’, for instance, seeing his wife-to-be, Rivka Imeinu! Rebbe Meir of Premishlan, zy'a, explains: Yitzchak did see Rivkah, and then “lifted his eyes”, looking into the future. He was ‘uplifted’ when he foresaw that their descendents would have the trait embodied by his bride — they would be גומלים, “givers”, actively generous and kind.

May we, the physical and spiritual descendents of our great-grandmother Rivka, continue her precious legacy. And may we merit to ‘uplift’ our great-grandfather Yitzchak by taking up the great honor of ‘*shlepping water*’ for one another. ■